

Notes used by Under-Secretary-General Diego Cordovez  
Representative of the Secretary-General  
on the Settlement of the Situation Relating to Afghanistan  
during a Press Conference held in Islamabad  
on Saturday 9 July 1988

1. The purpose of my trip to the area was to review the implementation of the Geneva Accords. I feel that this review has been carried out in a very satisfactory manner with the co-operation of all the Governments concerned including, of course, the guarantor Governments.

2. It has been agreed with the Parties, in connection with the allegations of violations lodged by the two sides thus far, that these took place during what we have agreed to describe as the "initial period" in the implementation of any international agreement. We have therefore agreed to "turn the page" and to start afresh. I have received from the Governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan very categorical and unmistakable assurances of their determination to carry out fully and in good faith the obligations set out in the Geneva Accords.

3. We are also introducing a number of changes in the procedures and modus operandi of the United Nations Good Offices Mission (UNGOMAP). These changes will be carried out with the co-operation of the two sides. For instance, we will establish two outposts of military staff at the border and we will have full access to airports to monitor the withdrawal of foreign troops.

4. I therefore feel that in every respect we have overcome the serious difficulties that we have encountered. What is important is that the Agreements are being implemented and that the Governments have reiterated to me their determination to comply fully with the obligations set out in the Geneva Accords.

Withdrawal of troops

5. I met in Kabul with General of the Army Valentin Varennikov, who has overall responsibility for the planning and execution of all withdrawal operations. He informed me that 32,000 Soviet military personnel have already left Afghanistan. This is the total number. If there have been some apparent discrepancies in statements made by Soviet authorities it is because of differences in terminology and translation. General Varennikov said that the Soviet Union has not slowed down or suspended the withdrawal process at any time and that they expect to meet the target established in the Geneva Accords - that is that 50 per cent of the troops will leave by 15 August.

## Mines

6. I have the impression that there is a real psychological warfare in this respect and this creates difficulties for the return of the refugees.

7. General Varennikov told me that, of 2,131 minefields that had been laid by the Soviet contingent, some 1,500 had already been removed as of 6 July. Out of 611 remaining minefields 200 had been turned over with maps to the Afghan Government army and the other 400 would be turned over as the withdrawal proceeds.

8. I was informed that all the minefields which still remain are those that are intended to protect essential services such as power plants, airports and military outposts. They had not been placed in cities, towns or fields; roads and paths which were expected to be used by the refugees have been cleared of mines. (General Varennikov said that opposition forces have been placing mines without any detailed records. The Soviet army had cleared some 240,000 mines and explosive devices laid by the opposition groups.)

## Prisoners of war

9. I also raised with all concerned the question of Soviet prisoners of war. All expressed the readiness to help resolve this matter as a humanitarian question and it was agreed that the International Committee of the Red Cross, which has dealt with this matter in the past and has the expertise, would be entrusted with it.

## A peaceful path towards a legitimate broad-based government in Afghanistan

10. As you know I received from the Governments that participated at the last round of Geneva talks a mandate to promote the formation of a broad-based Government. I was not appointed as mediator - we all agreed to promote the setting in motion by the Afghans of a process which would allow them to exercise their right of self-determination.

11. What all Afghans yearn for after so many years of war and suffering is a peaceful and stable Afghanistan, in which all segments of the Afghan nation can come together to heal the wounds of a tragic conflict and to rebuild their homeland. The full and faithful implementation of the Geneva Accords will provide the necessary external conditions that would enable the Afghans to pursue such a goal. What is urgently needed at this crucial time in Afghan history is a government founded on the broadest possible support of the Afghan people.

12. In the absence of such a government existing political forces are seeking to assert their strength by engaging in further military confrontations. The Afghan population is tired of the war and the suffering and will increasingly reject such a course and those who advocate it. There will be more political confusion, uncertainty and turmoil.

13. Different approaches to building a broad-based government have already been tried without success: the policy of national reconciliation instituted by the Government in Kabul has failed to produce the coalition government that it envisaged and the political forces outside the country have failed to gather the support which they expected in order to set up a Government acceptable to the majority of the Afghan people.

14. In the present circumstances normal political processes are, of course, extremely difficult - if not impossible. Therefore, it is suggested that the best way to facilitate the early establishment of a broad-based government would be for all segments of the Afghan nation to accept a "cooling off" period, during which leaders of all existing political parties would agree to postpone their active struggle as a patriotic sacrifice which the nation as a whole would undoubtedly acknowledge. Nobody would be requested to give up legitimate aspirations; what all Afghan political forces would be asked is to accept a more peaceful path which would have the effect of enhancing the legitimacy of all the steps that may be subsequently taken towards a broad-based government.

15. A "cooling-off" period would allow the Afghans to be reunited in their homeland and enable the international community to lend urgently-needed humanitarian assistance. The healing process would begin and it would then be possible to adopt the necessary measures to achieve peace - in strict conformity with Afghan traditions.

16. One possible course of action would be for a National Government for Peace and Reconstruction, consisting of Afghans of recognized independence and impartiality, to take office in Kabul on 1 September 1988 and for a de facto cease-fire in place between contending Afghans to become effective on that same date.

17. A list of the personalities which would comprise the National Government for Peace and Reconstruction would be formulated on the basis of broad consultations with all groups of Afghans. The principal objective of the National Government for Peace and Reconstruction would be to prepare the convening of a Loya Jirga - to be held not later than 1 March 1989. The members of the National Government for Peace and Reconstruction would undertake at the time of taking their oath of office not to accept any position in the government which would emerge from the Loya Jirga and which would be constituted not later than 15 March 1989.

18. The National Government for Peace and Reconstruction, upon taking office, would be responsible for conducting the affairs of the State, and would work out arrangements for both the acceleration of the return of all refugees and the setting in motion of an effective programme of resettlement and reconstruction. It would give particular attention to the adoption of measures designed gradually to create peaceful conditions in the whole country - as a means of ensuring the successful holding of the Loya Jirga. To that end it would seek from its inception to exercise effective control over the armed forces, and over all the police and security forces.

19. The National Government for Peace and Reconstruction would ensure that, during the period preceding the convening of the Loya Jirga, all political parties should be able to function in such a way that neither the legitimacy of the Loya Jirga nor the independence of the government that emerges can be challenged.

20. I have never doubted that the Afghan people would rise to the challenge that this conflict has placed before them. These are but few considerations that they might wish to bear in mind at a time when they are to take decisions - which they alone can take - to chart their destiny.